

M. JODI RELL
GOVERNOR

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

September 17, 2009

The Honorable James L. Oberstar, Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Oberstar:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act) activities in Connecticut as they relate to highway infrastructure investment initiatives.

Through the Recovery Act, Connecticut is receiving \$302 million in funding to invest in state and local highways and bridges. Of that, the state, through our Department of Transportation, is investing more than \$202 million in statewide initiatives and \$9 million in transportation enhancement projects. The remaining \$90 million in funding has been sub-allocated to the state's 15 Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

Prior to President Obama signing the Recovery Act into law on February 17, 2009, the state of Connecticut identified transportation projects of strategic importance throughout the state. As a result, Connecticut has been able to move forward a number of complex highway and bridge projects of statewide significance. These projects address a number of the state's long-term transportation initiatives and will prove to be strategic investments in the State's infrastructure.

This decision reflects our strong belief that these strategic investments will ultimately have a greater stimulative effect upon our economy than would projects that might have had quicker start times, such as patching potholes and simple repaving. We believe that this approach will also result in more meaningful employment opportunities for our

residents over a longer period of time. It will permit us to expend funds at a constant rate over the two-year life of the program, rather than exhausting all of our funds in one construction season.

Toward that end, Connecticut already has \$170 million worth of highway and bridge projects under contract and \$97 million in projects currently underway. While these are important numbers, what matters most is getting people back to work. More than 500 people in Connecticut have been put to work as the result of these projects including 350 more workers being added to the rolls in the last month alone.

Much work remains to be accomplished, however, and I clearly recognize the importance of getting projects underway and people back to work in an expeditious manner. We are presently exploring every possible means to move all of our projects as quickly as possible, including making resources available to assist our municipalities with local projects.

In identifying and determining which transportation initiatives to fund, I created the Connecticut Recovery Working Group that, amongst other things, weighed the geographic distribution of projects and funding throughout the state. While Connecticut does not have any "Economically Distressed Areas" as defined by Section 301 of the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965, as amended (42 U.S.C. 3161), Connecticut has selected transportation initiatives for funding in and around the state's major urban areas. These projects are both large and small and include major transit priorities such as the New Haven Rail Line station improvements as well as pavement preservation and safety projects.

As part of our effort to weigh the geographic distribution of transportation projects we attempted to strike a balance between projects of statewide significance and those of regional or local importance. The two largest projects being funded in Connecticut – the Amtrak bridge over Route 1 in Branford and the Merritt Parkway roadway improvement projects in Fairfield County – exemplify that approach.

The Merritt Parkway is one of state's vital transportation corridors between Connecticut and New York with thousands of motorists traveling the route everyday to and from work. The bridge project in Branford has long been on the drafting board as a project necessary to help spur local economic development and ease congestion in one of Connecticut's growing coastal communities. Beyond the local significance of this project, the Amtrak bridge also represents an overall transportation priority for the state - furthering the state's efforts to improve the I-95 corridor east of New Haven and replacing a turn-of-the century railroad bridge with a new structure.

Transportation projects also play an important role in the prosperity of the state's rural areas. Through the suballocation process, Connecticut's rural areas were provided just over \$4,000 to share amongst more than 25 towns statewide. To address this situation as


well as the growing list of transportation priorities in these communities, the state has provided more than \$4 million to the Metropolitan Planning Organizations in these regions to move ahead local road and bridge projects. The state is also utilizing a portion of the state's Recovery Act transportation funding to complete state-sponsored projects in a number of rural communities such as Ashford and Burlington.

Another aspect of the state's decision-making process for Recovery Act-funded transportation projects was the identification of projects of a diverse nature – not just traditional resurfacing and patching projects. The goal was and continues to be getting as many Connecticut residents back to work as possible. One way to accomplish that is to engage a variety of Connecticut businesses involved in transportation-related industries. Toward that end, Connecticut is funding projects of a complex nature that involve a number of separate components, such as the Amtrak bridge in Branford. In addition, companies involved with safety markings, traffic control signals and highway sign supports will be among the many different sectors participating in the economic recovery here in Connecticut.

Collectively, these approaches will allow Connecticut to address a number of the state's transportation priorities while providing gainful employment for those in transportation-related industries for a longer duration of time – months instead of weeks. Each and everyday we are adding more and more workers to transportation projects across the state and this is just the beginning. Over the next several months and continuing throughout 2010, Connecticut is poised to experience one of the busiest transportation construction periods in recent history.

Thank you, once again, for the opportunity to provide some thoughts on the work underway here in Connecticut to further important transportation initiatives through Recovery Act funding.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Jodi Rell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "M." and last name "Rell" clearly visible.

M. Jodi Rell
Governor